

In the Claims:

Please substitute the following claim 1 for the pending claim 1:

1. (once amended) An isolated or purified nucleic acid molecule comprising a polynucleotide having a nucleotide sequence at least 95% identical to a nucleotide sequence of a *Ketogulonigenium* plasmid replicon found on the endogenous plasmid contained in Deposit No. NRRL B-30035, wherein said replicon comprises SEQ ID NO:4 or a fragment thereof, wherein said fragment is capable of functioning as a replicon in *Ketogulonigenium*.

Please substitute the following claim 2 for the pending claim 2:

2. (once amended) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 1, wherein said replicon comprises said fragment, wherein said fragment comprises the nucleic acid sequence in SEQ ID NO:1.

Please substitute the following claim 4 for the pending claim 4:

4. (once amended) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 1, wherein said replicon comprises the DNA sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:4.

Please substitute the following claim 7 for the pending claim 7:

7. (once amended) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 1, comprising a mob site.

Please substitute the following claim 8 for the pending claim 8:

8. (once amended) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 7, wherein said mob site comprises a mob gene and an oriT from a conjugation plasmid.

Please substitute the following claim 21 for the pending claim 21:

21. (once amended) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 20, wherein said E. coli-derived plasmid is selected from the group consisting of pET, pUC18, and pUC19.

Please substitute the following claim 23 for the pending claim 23:

23. (once amended) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 22, wherein said reporter gene encodes a protein selected from the group consisting of β -galactosidase, β -glucuronidase, luciferase, green fluorescent protein α -amylase, and uroporphyrinogen III methyltransferase (cobA) from *Propionibacterium freudenreichii*.

Please substitute the following claim 24 for the pending claim 24:

24. (once amended) The nucleic acid molecule of claim 1, wherein said nucleic acid molecule autonomously replicates in *Ketogulonigenium* and in at least one organism selected from the genera consisting of *Acetobacter*, *Corynebacterium*, *Bacillus*, *Rhodobacter*, *Paracoccus*, *Roseobacter*, *Pseudomonas*, *Pseudogluconobacter*, *Gluconobacter*, *Serratia*, *Mycobacterium*, and *Streptomyces*.